

Cut Carbon, Cut Costs

By 2050, the Government says emissions from buildings must be reduced by 60% on 1990 levels; as 70 % of existing stock will still be here in 2050, much of those reductions must come from existing properties, particularly offices, retail, hotels and factories. Saving carbon saves cash, and improves a company's CSR image and customer appeal.

"Ever since reducing carbon dioxide emissions became an imperative, buildings have become the No 1 priority, with a huge political emphasis on making new buildings sustainable," says Derek Rees, Chief Executive of the South East Centre for the Built Environment (SECBE). "But the major impact or contribution of existing buildings has tended to be overlooked - madness when a typical 2006 office building is 40 % more efficient than one built in 2002, and the majority of existing buildings will be used for years to come."

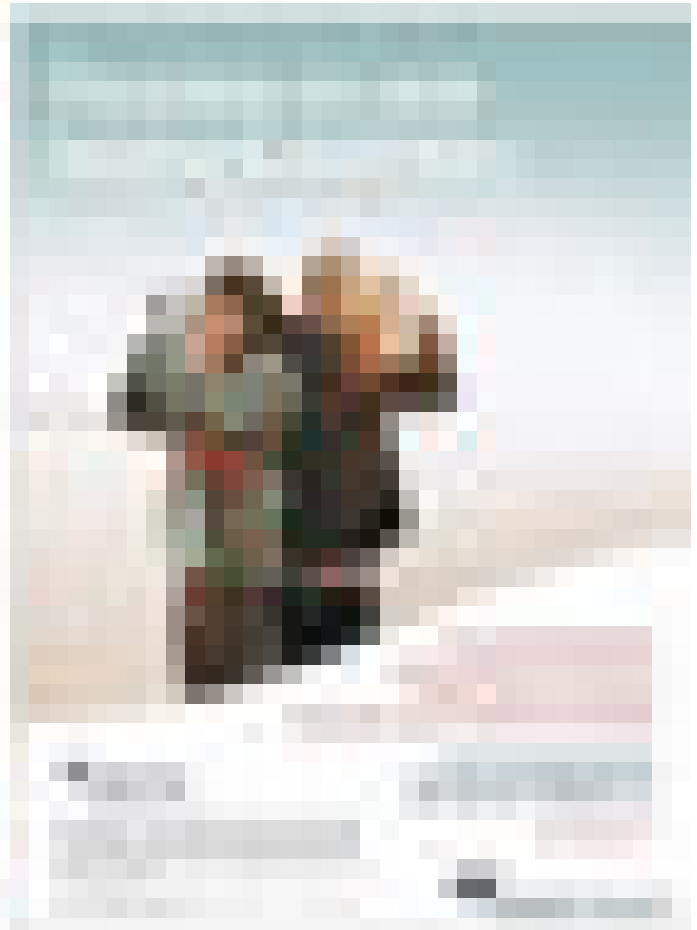
Derek's organisation, SECBE, is a specialist strategic business

partnership with the **South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)**, with the sole intent of driving innovation and positive change in **building policy and corporate behaviour**, including promoting best practice in refurbishing buildings to make them sustainable.

Green Up

Derek says that the business case for developers and landlords to 'green the office' is overwhelming. "If you focus on reducing energy and water use and limiting or recycling waste, you make significant cost savings. Cutting water use, for example, cuts costs and carbon emissions too, because less water equals less water treatment/transport which is carbon intensive. You can also reduce cost and carbon by making the construction process even more efficient; although improving, it is still responsible for 32 % of all landfill. Demanding zero construction waste reduces build costs and environmental impact. And, in a world where the green expectation is growing, it makes you a good corporate citizen too."

But the imperative is coming quicker than we think as regulation marches on. With **growing pressure on the public sector** to lead the way, programmes like the **High Performing Property Programme** are very helpful - looking at how to optimise worker use of **reducing floor space** as well as signing **tougher facilities** management contracts to drive up operational efficiency. In October this year, the Display **Energy Certificate scheme becomes mandatory**, so that all public buildings from Number 10 Downing Street to the local library have to be certified for



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their energy efficiency. **The same is likely for all privately owned buildings.**

Even earlier than that, **from April 6th this year**, Energy Performance Certificates **have to be provided for all new builds** and for any building to be **sold or let over 10,000 square metres**. From this July, any building over 2,500 square metres built, sold or leased comes under the regulation. And from October, **every building** will require an Energy Performance Certificate.

Megabucks

Making the existing building stock **sustainable is not necessarily expensive**, as a recent report by leading global construction consultants Cyril Sweett for the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors shows. Just painting walls a light colour could **reduce energy use from lighting by up to 10 %** while the general use of energy efficient lighting could double that. Installing double glazing to improve thermal performance also makes a big difference and using flow regulated taps can reduce water consumption. **The bigger the refurbishment, the bigger the scope for savings** and, to encourage companies to go as far as they can, the RICS has called on the Government to introduce **incentives such as a VAT rate of 5%** rather than 17.5 % on redevelopment schemes. Equally, the report argues for the planning and building regulations to **'help rather than hinder'** sustainable refurbishment.

Improving the specialist skills required and carrying out more research into energy efficient buildings are also part of the RICS call. Both are areas where SECBE is active. Derek and his team are planning to research and establish best principles of **'eco-engineering'**; by studying ten-year-old examples of four types of commercial buildings - **a hotel, retail outlet, leisure and industrial facilities** - they will demonstrate how the optimal energy savings, water reduction and material use can be achieved. The aim is to create **best practice examples for use in each sector** and SECBE is at present looking for partner companies with **eligible properties**.

If you would like to know more about this programme or would like information on low carbon refurbishment, contact Derek Rees at SECBE on 0118 920 7207 or visit secbe.org.uk

